

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0550

March 3, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I write to express grave concern over multiple news reports¹ detailing how federal funds were awarded through a combination of annual congressional appropriations and grants to the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), with subsequent grants to The Global Disinformation Index (GDI).

Specifically, the *Washington Examiner* has reported that the GDI – a British organization that has received more than \$660,000 from two State Department-backed entities – created what it termed a “dynamic exclusion list” of conservative media websites that it then provided to online entities and recommended the targeted sites be excluded and demonetized.

Demonstrating the extreme partisan and political nature of the GDI’s work, its target list¹ included popular and established media entities including the *Washington Examiner*, Real Clear Politics, the *Federalist*, Newsmax, Breitbart, the *Daily Wire*, One America News, and the *New York Post* – the oldest continuously-published newspaper in America.

One entity that followed the GDI’s recommendations was the advertising company Xandr, which agreed not to place ads on the websites the GDI flagged as peddling disinformation. In the wake of the *Washington Examiner*’s reporting, however, Xandr has now launched a review of its relationship with GDI and has suspended usage of GDI’s services.²

What can’t be suspended, however, is the inescapable fact that this administration gave Congressionally authorized federal funding to a European nonprofit and weaponized the Global

¹ <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/restoring-america/equality-not-elitism/disinformation-group-secretly-blacklisting-right-wing-outlets-bankrolled-state-department>

² Ibid, *Washington Examiner*.

² <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/cec/index.htm>

⁴ <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-public-diplomacy-and-public-affairs/global-engagement-center/>

Engagement Center to target disfavored viewpoints, censor online media, and silence conservative voices.

A review of the GEC's founding shows how far it has strayed from its original mission and organizing principles.

The GEC was founded in 2011 under Executive Order 13584, which established the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications (CSCC); before being transitioned into the GEC in 2016 under Executive Order 13721². The GEC's stated mission is "to direct, lead, synchronize, integrate and coordinate U.S. Federal Government efforts to recognize, understand, expose, and counter foreign state and non-state propaganda and disinformation efforts aimed at undermining or influencing the policies, security, or stability of the United States, its allies, and partner nations."³

Mr. Secretary, the weaponization by the federal government of the term "disinformation" for the purposes of silencing and censoring free speech must stop. The Department of State's flagrant disregard in this case is a clear violation of Congressional intent, the principles of our democracy and the inherent rights of all Americans. It is imperative that the Department of State undertake a prompt and comprehensive inquiry into any grants, authorities, and policies that may be improperly and illegally used to curtail the free expression of conservative and/or domestic media, and to take corrective measures as warranted by the results of such investigation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Darrell Issa', with a stylized, flowing script.

DARRELL ISSA
Member of Congress